

Los Angeles Times

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Why Trump Lies

PART I

Our Dishonest President

(/projects/la-ed-our-dishonest-president/)

PART II

Why Trump Lies

(/projects/la-ed-why-trump-)

By THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD (HTTP://WWW.LATIMES.COM/LA-BIO-TIMES-EDITORIAL-BOARD-STAFF.HTML)

APRIL 3, 2017

Donald Trump did not invent the lie and is not even its master. Lies have oozed out of the White House for more than two centuries and out of politicians' mouths — out of all

people's mouths — likely as long as there has been human speech.

But amid all those lies, told to ourselves and to one another in order to amass power, woo lovers, hurt enemies and shield ourselves against the often glaring discomfort of reality, humanity has always had an abiding respect for truth.

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In the United States, born and periodically reborn out of the repeated recognition and rejection of the age-old lie that some people are meant to take dominion over others, truth is as vital a part of the civic, social and intellectual culture as justice and liberty. Our civilization is premised on the conviction that such a thing as truth exists, that it is knowable, that it is verifiable, that it exists independently of authority or popularity and that at some point — and preferably sooner rather than later — it will prevail.

Even American leaders who lie generally know the difference between their statements and the truth. Richard Nixon said “I am not a crook” but by that point must have seen that he was. Bill Clinton said “I did not have sexual relations with that woman” but knew that he did.

“

He targets the darkness, anger and insecurity that hide in each of us and harnesses them for his own purposes.

”

The insult that Donald Trump brings to the equation is an apparent disregard for fact so profound as to suggest that he may not see much practical distinction between lies, if he believes they serve him, and the truth.

His approach succeeds because of his preternaturally deft grasp of his audience. Though he is neither terribly articulate nor a seasoned politician, he has a remarkable instinct for discerning which conspiracy theories in which quasi-news source, or which of his own inner

musings, will turn into ratings gold. He targets the darkness, anger and insecurity that hide in each of us and harnesses them for his own purposes. If one of his lies doesn't work — well, then he lies about that.

If we harbor latent racism or if we fear terror attacks by Muslim extremists, then he elevates a rumor into a public debate: Was Barack Obama born in Kenya, and is he therefore not really president?



An 'extremely credible source' has called my office and told me that [@BarackObama](https://twitter.com/BarackObama) (<https://twitter.com/BarackObama>)'s birth certificate is a fraud.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 6, 2012 
(<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/232572505238433794>)

Libya is being taken over by Islamic radicals —with [@BarackObama](https://twitter.com/BarackObama) (<https://twitter.com/BarackObama>)'s open support.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 31, 2011 
(<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/108933866936475648>)

If his own ego is threatened — if broadcast footage and photos show (<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-crowd-sizes-20170127-story.html>) a smaller-sized crowd at his inauguration than he wanted — then he targets the news media, falsely charging outlets with disseminating “fake news” and insisting, against all evidence, that he has proved his case (“We caught them in a beauty,” he said (<http://transcripts.factcheck.org/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-cia-headquarters/>)).

If his attempt to limit the number of Muslim visitors to the U.S. degenerates into an absolute fiasco and a display of his administration’s incompetence, then he falsely asserts that terrorist attacks are underreported. (One case in point offered (<http://www.latimes.com/politics/washington/la-na-essential-washington-updates-trump-says-without-evidence-that-1486435101-htmlstory.html>) by the White House was the **2015** attack in San Bernardino, which in fact received intensive worldwide news coverage. The Los Angeles Times won (<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/los-angeles-times-staff>) a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on the subject).

If he detects that his audience may be wearying of his act, or if he worries about a probe into Russian meddling into the election that put him in office, he tweets (<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/837989835818287106>)

in the middle of the night the astonishingly absurd claim that President Obama tapped his phones. And when evidence fails to support him he dispatches his aides to explain

(<http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/03/13/sean-spicer-wiretap-claims-investigation-sot.cnn>) that by “phone tapping” he obviously didn’t mean phone tapping. Instead of backing down when confronted with reality, he insists that his rebutted assertions will be vindicated as true at some point in the future.

Trump’s easy embrace of untruth can sometimes be entertaining, in the vein of a Moammar Kadafi speech to the United Nations or the self-serving blathering of a 6-year-old.

“

He gives every indication that he is as much the gullible tool of liars as he is the liar in chief.

”

But he is not merely amusing. He is dangerous. His choice of falsehoods and his method of spewing them — often in tweets, as if he spent his days and nights glued to his bedside radio and was periodically set off by some drivel uttered by a talk show host who repeated something he'd read on some fringe blog — are a clue to Trump's thought processes and perhaps his lack of agency. He gives every indication that he is as much the gullible tool of liars as he is the liar in chief.

He has made himself the stooge, the mark, for every crazy blogger, political quack, racial theorist, foreign leader or nutcase peddling a story that he might repackage to his benefit as a tweet, an appointment, an executive order or a policy. He is a stranger to the concept of verification, the insistence on evidence and the standards of proof that apply in a courtroom or a medical lab — and that ought to prevail in the White House.

There have always been those who accept the intellectually bankrupt notion that people are entitled to invent their own facts — consider the “9/11 was an inside job” trope — but Trump's ascent marks the first time that the culture of alternative reality has made its home at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

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If Americans are unsure which Trump they have — the Machiavellian negotiator who lies to manipulate simpler minds, or one of those simpler minds himself — does it really matter? In either case he puts the nation in danger by undermining the role of truth in public discourse and policymaking, as well as the notion of truth being verifiable and mutually intelligible.

In the months ahead, Trump will bring his embrace of alternative facts on the nation's behalf into talks with China, North Korea or any number of powers with interests counter to ours and that constitute an existential threat. At home, Trump now becomes the embodiment of the populist notion (with roots planted at least as deeply in the Left as the Right) that verifiable truth is merely a concept invented by fusty intellectuals, and that popular leaders can provide some equally valid substitute. We've seen people like that before, and we have a name for them: demagogues.

Our civilization is defined in part by the disciplines — science, law, journalism — that have developed systematic methods to arrive at the truth. Citizenship brings with it the obligation to engage in a similar

process. Good citizens test assumptions, question leaders, argue details, research claims.

Investigate. Read. Write. Listen. Speak. Think. Be wary of those who disparage the investigators, the readers, the writers, the listeners, the speakers and the thinkers. Be suspicious of those who confuse reality with reality TV, and those who repeat falsehoods while insisting, against all evidence, that they are true. To defend freedom, demand fact.

This is the second in a series.

The Problem with Trump

A series of Times editorials

- I. Our Dishonest President (</projects/la-ed-our-dishonest-president/>)
- II. Why Trump Lies (</projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/>)
- III. Trump's Authoritarian Vision (</projects/la-ed-trumps-authoritarian-vision/>)
- IV. Trump's War on Journalism (</projects/la-ed-trumps-war-on-journalism/>)
- V. Conspiracy Theorist in Chief (</projects/la-ed-conspiracy-theorist-in-chief/>)
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Design and production by Andrea Roberson

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#1 **10vewar** • 489 points

Anyone who thinks Trump is about anything other than making money for himself and his family at the expense of the average American is a fool. Everything he has done, everyone he has appointed is someone who is going to make his empire money. Health care reform? Saves billionaires millions on taxes but leaves millions of Americans not covered. The budget? Cuts everything that helps the elderly, the poor and the sick and adds to our bloated military budget. It's all about money and Donald J Trump...

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#2 **OriginalTheDUde** • 439 points



Trump and his team have yet to realize that the presidency is a daily deluge of work and information such that nobody is truly doing the heavy lifting. Can anyone honestly believe that Trump is prioritizing policy papers over his Tweeter feed? Trump looks more bewildered each day, scattering like a cat recently when he was going to sign something and flash the document, but the press started asking him questions he didn't want to answer so he left, too funny indeed. But as Trump would say, "Sad!" ...

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#3 **david0673** • 206 points



We've probably all experienced pathological liars, of which DJT is an excellent example, in our own lives. But what's up with this? Why do they do it? I think the answer lies in examining the reasons why people speak to each other in the first place. There are at least two very different reasons: 1. The speaker wants to communicate information, or emotions, to the listener. 2. The speaker wants his words to have a specific effect on the listener. Usually these two aspects are combined and balanced....

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I think you have nailed it, david0673!! If we think further about your proposal, journalists in particular will be able to re-think their approach to DJT because right now, they are SO playing in his hands, i.e. the Trump nation (meaning the rest of followers) are awaiting every pique, turning each probing question asked, into a witch hunt by the establishment, trying to kill their ultimate victim representative and not educated enough on civil rights and duties to separate the media position (and rhetoric) from how DJT interprets it for them!! Please LA and NY Times, lead the pack again and start writing a DJT series in a rhetoric style to get through to THEM (Announce it, call it the Trump Nation version of the article: it may just work!!) and show him you learned from your 100+ days too and adjust to reach out to this US population, so representative of our profound concerns with where this global world is going and yes, with the establishment (not the rule of law not the US governance system!) driving our lives without a blink for the increasing revenue gap nor sending regular messages of hope addressing

real working families' issues such as free college education or daycare (which couldn't have been foreseen in the Capitalist Bible since all women would be working at home while great Dads were kept at the manufacture, lovely pic, eh??!). Let's avoid another nuclear-frightened génération like Génération X, and educate, educate, educate instead of pushing further Milleniums And older disappointed Baby-Boomers into a closed corner Who do not understand media's current rhetoric!!

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While the editors make the plain and necessary case of Trump's incompetence, etc., the fact remains that not a single part of the official 9/11 Commission report stands up to basic scrutiny. How dare you compare such basic (accurate) skepticism with the mindless bluster of Trump?

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 **Larry Lacina** — Reader • 1 month(s) ago (http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/?#track=lat_digitalads_our-dishonest-president_content-promotion_outbrain_content-marketing_____#sot_3f02155faa9ab1ab2203caa7e5eb83cc78f0d)

Thank you LA Times for speaking truth to power. I subscribed and I live in Lynchburg VA (The Belly of the Beast)

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 **Michel Patrick** — Reader • 1 month(s) ago (http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/?#track=lat_digitalads_our-dishonest-president_content-promotion_outbrain_content-marketing_____#sot_8ad49c63ae5716b638bb7c3f63ab06ee21b1b422)

Why not drop the assertion that the « Russians » interfered in the election? The so-called « evidence » comes from the Deep State who habitually lie as well as interfere in elections in other countries including Russia. A lie goes around the world before the truth even gets his boots on. Just that is enough to make me stop reading.

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 **hunternomore** — Reader in reply to **Michel Patrick** “ Why not drop the assertion tha... more » • 22 day(s) ago (http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/?#track=lat_digitalads_our-dishonest-president_content-promotion_outbrain_content-marketing_____#sot_2cbeaf5b42cf61cb5eaa9dec2952854deb91685e)

Anyone who doesn't know this is true just, quite literally, hasn't done their homework, hasn't been reading(including European news) and just shouldn't even be allowed to vote let alone comment!

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 **Ranger H-75th** — Reader in reply to **hunternomore** “ Anyone who doesn't know this i... more » • 10 day(s) ago (http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/?#track=lat_digitalads_our-dishonest-president_content-promotion_outbrain_content-marketing_____#sot_3288f28682a1ea2449a9dd47adaa654e74420676)

Please provide your homework and reading.

From the New York Times - "What is missing from the public report is what many Americans most eagerly anticipated: hard evidence to back up the agencies' claims that the Russian government engineered the election attack."

or

" the eavesdroppers of the N.S.A. believe with only "moderate confidence" that Russia aimed to help Mr. Trump".
Where is yours?

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10vevar — Reader • 1 month(s) ago (http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/?#track=lat_digitalads_our-dishonest-president_content-promotion_outbrain_content-marketing_____#sot_13ecbd57ccc8ff22b5c7b2da612224bab9fe8b4d)



Anyone who thinks Trump is about anything other than making money for himself and his family at the expense of the average American is a fool. Everything he has done, everyone he has appointed is someone who is going to make his empire money. Health care reform? Saves billionaires millions on taxes but leaves millions of Americans not covered. The budget? Cuts everything that helps the elderly, the poor and the sick and adds to our bloated military budget. It's all about money and Donald J Trump and Donald J Trump's money and everyone else gets the shaft. You can bet that the US educational system is going to go from bad to ridiculously bad.

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I believe that he feels as if he has dug himself in so deep through lies and all else he has done that he does not have the courage to recognize his wrongs, even TOO HIMSELF.

I believe that his mental capacity has become so deranged that he is feeling more and more cornered.

Therefore, he continues the lies, attacks and inventions due to not being able to get out of them.

A perfect analogy would be the cartoon of someone painting himself into a corner.

I actually do expect him to implode into a psychological breakdown.

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cately-58 — Reader • 1 month(s) ago (http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/?#track=lat_digitalads_our-dishonest-president_content-promotion_outbrain_content-marketing_____#sot_4d4eeb2082d6318f1f32035c3443a416883382f3)



Like, tell me which of his campaign promises he's kept.

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